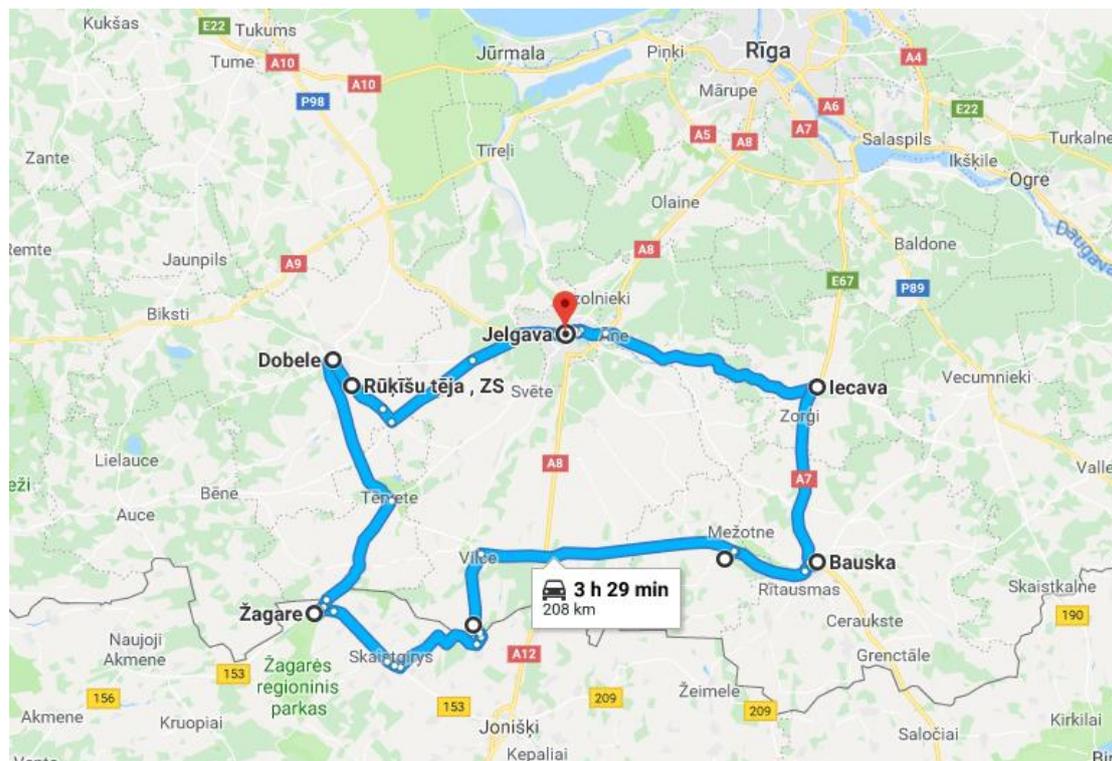


## 1. Gardens ar tree nurseries

**Tour duration:** 3 days, 271 km, cycling 15 km

**Tour route:** Jelgava – Iecava – Brukna – Bauska – Mežotne – Rundāle – Blankenfelde – Tērvete – Žagare (LT) – Kroņauce – Dobele – Jelgava

Tour route:

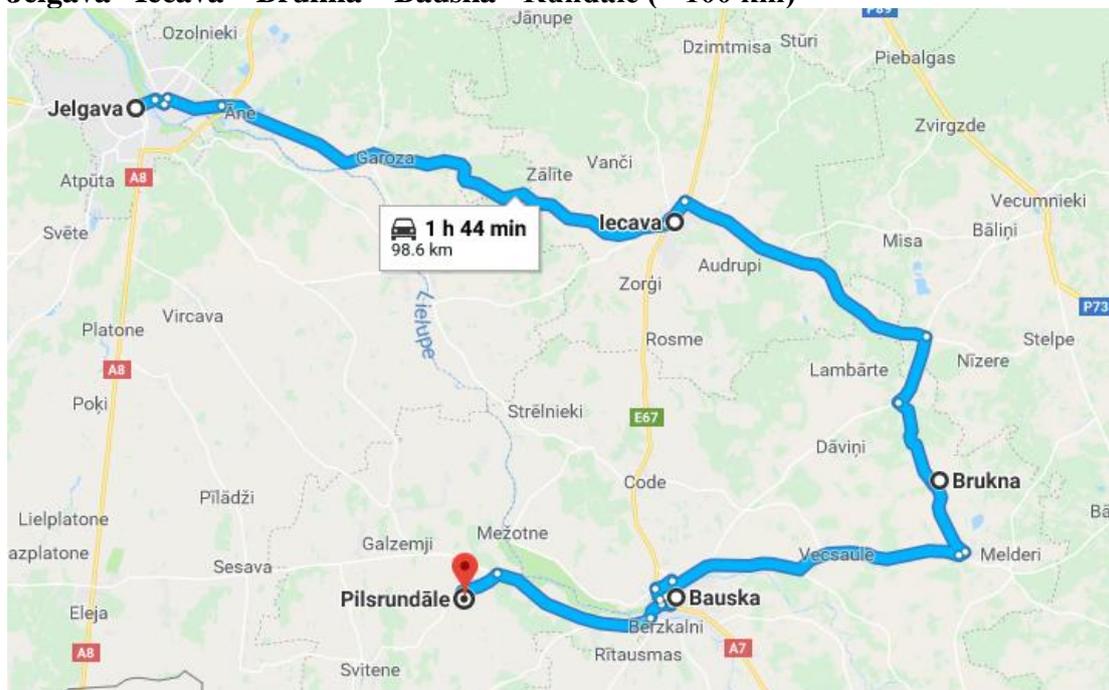


This tour takes you to beautiful gardens in Latvia and Lithuania. Poems are dedicated to trees in the garden surrounding the memorial house of Edvarts Virza, a Latvian poet and writer who wrote a legendary novel about the lives of Latvian farmers. Strūbergu decorative garden offers a garden excursion and consultations in gardening. At Brukna manor you will see a vegetable garden that is arranged as a Renaissance park, a rose garden and a vineyard. The beautiful 18<sup>th</sup> century Mazmežotne castle is renovated by a grain farmer's family. The Rundāle castle is known as Latvia's true jewel of Baroque and Rococo architecture featuring also a rose garden with over 2200 varieties of roses. At Blankenfelde manor you will see a collection of bells and will enjoy natural juices, syrups and pickles produced in-house. Visiting Mint House you will taste mint tea, biscuits, honey with peppermint and peppermint syrups. Next stop is at the vegetable and herb farm "Healthy" producing herbal ointments. In Lithuania you will visit Žagarė, known for its cherry orchard-park and the special species of cherry – the 'Žagarvyšnė', on the National List of Plant Varieties. Stop by Žagarė Manor Park, containing more than 100 species of trees and shrubs. Back in Latvia you can have a picnic at Vilki arboretum showing about 1000 different plants - both typical of the landscape of Latvia and quite unique. At Zaļenieki tree nursery, you can walk in the garden with over 2000 trees and shrubs. Further you will enjoy the beauty of peonia in the collection garden by

Andris Berkins. Amatnieki homestead offers tours of their tulip garden. Klūgu landscape garden is famous for begonias. Institute of horticulture in Dobeles owns a collection of over 200 types and forms of lilac plants. The “Beautiful&Practical” garden is proud of its collection of conifers, and the hosts offer tastings of herbal spice powders, dried berries and fruit. “Rūķīšu tea” is one of the largest farms for medicinal plants in Latvia (purple coneflowers, marigolds, chamomile, etc). And finally, visit Liepas tree nursery specialised in cultivation of fruit-trees, berry bushes and roses.

## First day

### Jelgava –Iecava – Brukna – Bauska - Rundāle (> 100 km)



#### Eduard's Virzas memorial house, „Billītes”

Located in the Salgale Parish, about 6 km from Iecava, is the home of the father of Edvarts Virza (born Jēkabs Eduards Lieksna, 1883-194), “Billītes,” to which the family moved in 1901. Virza was a distinguished 20th century writer, poet, prose writer, publicist and translator. He wrote many poems at “Billītes,” and in 1933, he released his legendary novel “Straumēni” about the lives of Latvian farmers. A museum in honour of Virza is at the homestead today. The horse chestnut tree that is alongside the home is the largest one in Latvia (a diameter of 4.2 m and a height of 0.4 m). It is described in “Straumēni.”

#### Strūbergu family garden

This place has been awarded the honorary name of the most outstanding Latvian garden and specimen garden several times. The hosts offer excursions and tips for gardening.



#### Brukna manor

Brukna manor house was built in the 18th century, but got ruined in the Soviet times. Currently it is being renovated, including the garden. Very interesting is the Renaissance-style root and herb garden, which is maintained by the manor's inhabitants. Plant species change in it every year. Only a small part of the area of 20

ha is occupied by a park (recently planted), but it is worth seeing, especially for rosaries and vines. There are also rare species like edible chestnuts and an old “Grušovka Moskovskaya” apple tree. The garden is decorated with many donated sculptures.

*Possible to order meals in advance.*

**For meals in Bauska we recommend:**

- Cafe „Aveņi”
- Cafe „Taverna”
- Cafe „Tornis”



**The Mazmežotne estate** stands on a hill by the Lielupe river. The place is surrounded by nature and offers rooms for guests, food service, rooms for celebrations and seminars. For active holidays, one can enjoy cycling, boating and walks on nature trails and paths in the surroundings.



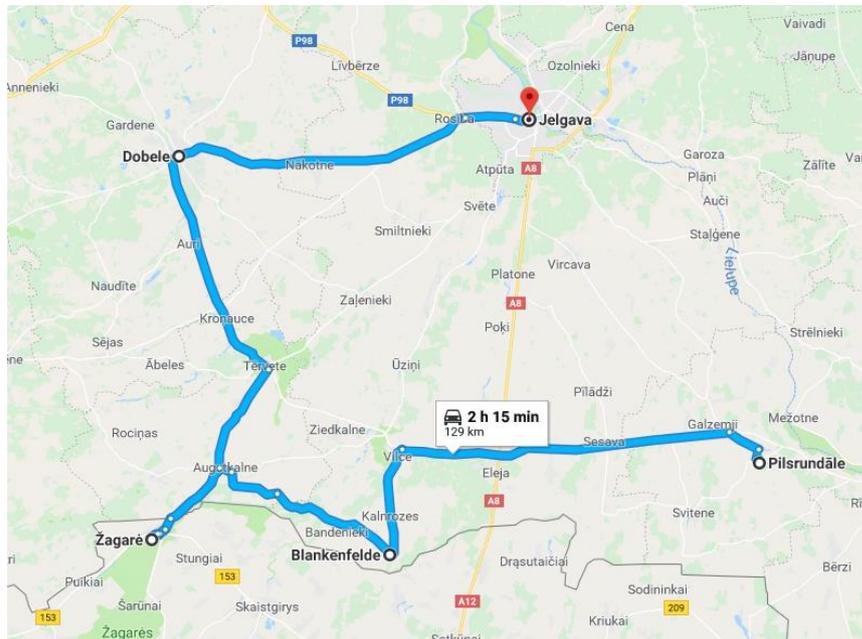
**The Rundāle Castle** is known as Latvia’s true jewel of Baroque and Rococo architecture, and it is certainly the country’s most important historical monument in relation to those two styles. The castle was at first the summer residence of the duke of Courland, Ernst Johan Byron (1690-1772), and it was designed by the Italian architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli. There is a museum in the castle, and the restored Baroque French garden is the largest garden of its type in the Baltic States.

**Accommodation in Rundale region:**

- Guest house „Baltā māja”
- Guest house „Vīnkalni”
- The Mazmežotne estate
- Guest house „Straumēni”

## Second day

### Rundāle – Blankenfelde – Žagare- Dobele (131km)



#### Blankenfelde manor

Manor is a national culture monument with many centuries long history. The beautiful manor park has been restored, with a modern children's playground, while in the renovated stall house is located on the first floor of the bell museum, and in the second - modern hotel rooms, where you can stay, enjoy the atmosphere of the manor, peacefully rest and in the next morning - a delicious breakfast. Blankenfelde Manor offers 100% natural juices, delicious and healthy syrups from elk, apples, currants, currants, pumpkins and carrots, as well as preserves grown from the manor gardens.

In "**Mint house**" there is the opportunity to taste different mint tea, biscuits, honey with peppermint and peppermint syrups. There are workshops with making peppermint soap, painted plates with peppermint, decoration of candles and much more. The owner makes also peppermint powder and face tonic.

#### Farm „Droši vesels”

The property is located in Vilcea rural municipality of Jelgava. Grows greenhouse vegetables and plants, makes various ointments from herbs and offers lectures on healthy diet and lifestyle.

Latvia / Lithuania border.

**Žagarē** has long been known for its special species of cherry – the ‘Žagarvyšņē’. It has several varieties, which differ in terms of ripening time, yield, the shape of the

fruit and other attributes. They were added to the National List of Plant Varieties in 1962. To this day, this species of cherry is grown in nearly every homestead in Žagarė and is the symbol of the town. In order to preserve Žagarė's cultural and natural heritage and uniqueness, the Žagarė cherry orchard was planted in 2011 on the bank of the Švėtė river on the edge of town.



Visit **Žagarė Regional Park**, where you will find a newly planted cherry orchard featuring a gazebo, benches, paths, tables, an amphitheatre, the “Spider” observation point, and “bug hotels” (nesting boxes made from various materials for large insects). Climb up the Žvelgaitis hill fort, take a walk along the Mūšos Tyrelis educational trail in the Žagarė esker, or take the pontoon bridge to “Love Island” in Lake Žvelgaičiai.

The best time to visit is either in the first two weeks of May, when the cherry trees are in peak bloom, or in July, when the cherries are ready to harvest. The Žagarė Cherry Festival takes place every July. <http://www.vysniufestivalis.lt>

Stop by **Žagarė Manor Park**, which for years has been one of the most ornate and architecturally interesting parks in Lithuania. In 1898–1900, the manor park was reconstructed and expanded according to the design of the renowned dendrologist Georg Friedrich Ferdinand Kuphaldt. More than 200 species of trees and shrubs were planted in the park. Over 100 of them are still growing there now. There are numerous different roads and paths that have survived to this day and that you can take to get a feel for the grandeur and beauty of the park. The park has a dendrology trail where 15 rare trees are marked and information about them is provided.

Lithuania/ Latvia border



**The plant grower and dendrarium "Vilki"** is a small green oasis among the extensive cereal fields of Zemgale. Here you can go on a pedestrian walk through the arboretum and farmland, discovering about 1000 different plants - both typical of the landscape of Latvia and quite unique. Owners are growing different kind of plants and herbs. There are also Latvian blue cows on the farm. Visitors have a picnic area available.

### **„Zaļenieki” tree nursery**

An arboretum or introduction garden covers an area of 1 hectare, in which more than 2000 tree species taxa can be seen. The garden is open to visitors during the tree nursery's working hours. Here you can see the larger trees and shrubs that can be designed (transmitted) into your own garden.

### **Peony gardens „Galdnieki”**

Andrew Berkin's Peony Gardens in Kronauce. Peony collector in spring not only opens their own garden to the guests but also popularizes the name of Tervete,

bringing beautiful flower stories around the world, offering seedlings for visitors to have for the beauty of their own garden.

Blooming of peonies can be seen during the blooming period of peonies, in June.

### **Tulip garden „Viestardi”**

The main activity of the farm is the creation and cultivation of a tulip collection. Production of sea buckthorn products.

Suggested time for visit is May.

### **Accommodation in Dobele surroundings:**

- Camping “Niedras”

### **For meals in Dobele and surroundings we recommend:**

- Miltinkrogs
- Tērvetes garšu restorāns
- Restaurant Zoltners in Kroņauce

### **Third day**

#### **Dobele – Jelgava (40 km)**

#### **Cycling in the Dobele city 15 km**

#### **Štelmaheru rock garden and Klūgu family garden**

Klūgu family’s landscape garden, which is recognized as one of the most beautiful gardens in Latvia, must definitely be included on the summer tour plans. The best way to enjoy the varied landscape of the garden, as suggested by the owners themselves – is in the month of July, when the diverse summer flowers flourish most vividly. Hostess Ženija’s favorite flowers are begonias, which are found in the garden, both in flower beds and in special flower pots. In order to experience the Klūgu family’s dream - to live in a park, one has to see the large leafy trees typical of the landscape of Latvia, the various coniferous and brasserie parks that have been created for many years, the work and pride of their owners - Geneva and Aivars.



**Institute of horticulture in Dobele** owns the largest collection of lilac plants in the Baltic States (~200 types and forms). Tour the garden, visit the Pēteris Upītis Museum, purchase plants, and taste and purchase fruit, berries, juices and candies.

#### **Skaisto un praktisko ideju dārzs Dobelē (Beautiful and practical ideas garden in Dobele)**

Beautiful and practical ideas in the garden, gorgeous flowering plants and a wide range of pebbles delight your eyes throughout the year. Behind the house in the farming zone is a root garden and greenhouses. In the garden there are available fruit,

spice powder and dried fruit tastings of the brand “Pita” - organized for group of tourists.



**Herb grower Rūķīšu tea** is one of the largest farms for medicinal plants in Latvia (purple coneflowers, marigolds, chamomile, etc). You can tour an introductory garden, purchase plants and mixed teas, and taste them.

**The nursery “Liepas”** located in Dobeles town is a dynamically growing seed-plot specialised in cultivation of fruit-trees, berry bushes and roses. Wide-range offer of high quality plantlets for fruit-trees, berry bushes and roses offering the diverse assortment of sorts. The visitors can see the plantlets in containers as well the presentation garden, where samples of grown-up trees are planted. In spring the visitors can enjoy the beauty of blooming trees and taste the cherries, apples, pears and plums in summer and fall. The farm sells the plantlets of fruit-trees, berry-bushes and roses.

Return in Jelgava.